THE
CATHOLIC RADICAL

"...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed." Peter Maurin

October/November 2017 ***Price: For whatever it's worth.***

The Challenge of Nonviolence

by Jim Schutze

Editor's Note: This editorial is excerpted from the Dallas Observer, *August 24-30, 2017. We received it from Michael Marek of the Dallas Catholic Worker.*

How should we as citizens respond when the Nazis march here?

Any of us — every one of us — can understand the satisfaction that people in the antifa (anti-fascist) movement felt when they donned helmets, picked up shields and went to do battle with the racist demonstrators in Charlottesville. What could be more satisfying than punching a Nazi in the face?

And that's exactly what's wrong with it. That's the moral error right there. Personal satisfaction is the crack cocaine that keeps people from getting straight with history.

History isn't about me. Or you. It's universal. That was the powerful, overarching principle recognized by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the national leaders of the ,Southern Christian Leadership Conference, who, by the way, were all really well-versed in history and philosophy.

Depriving evil of a resort to equivalence is bitterly hard work. Evil's greatest desire is to pull the opponent down into the muck with it.

Maybe there's a misunderstanding about nonviolent resistance among people who do not know the history of the civil rights movement in general or the SCLC in particular. Maybe somebody thinks there was something soft or easy about nonviolent resistance.

The SCLC ran boot camps to teach people how not to fight back, how to take a beating and never throw a punch. The point of it was never the fight itself. The point was that when the larger world looked in on what happened in Selma, in Montgomery, in Little Rock, the world saw evil on one side only. One side only was spitting, kicking, beating, burning, killing.

An anti-fascist graphic

Look at the gift the antifas handed to President Donald Trump at Charlottesville. The moment the first image appeared of anti-Nazis wearing helmets and throwing punches in Emancipation Park, it was an absolute given that Trump or somebody like him would use that image to declare the moral equivalence of the two sides.

Last Saturday night's vigil for peace in front of Dallas City Hall came out OK, and the leaders who organized it, including some from Black Lives Matter, deserve credit for that. But it could have gone the other way.

The supposedly antifascist "black

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Harassment at Horseneck

by Grace Sliwoski

Editor's Note: In 1982, when Scott Schaeffer-Duffy was a member of the Saint Benedict's Catholic Worker in Washington, DC, he and several black guests to the movies in Georgetown, an affluent, mostly white neighborhood. While they were waiting quietly in the ticket line, a police car pulled up to the curb. A black officer rolled down the passenger window and called out, "You boys looking for trouble?" Only after Scott assured the policemen that the men were with him, did they depart.

The following letter by Scott's daughter Grace Sliwoski is indicative of how people of color continue to be treated with suspicion and disrespect even by supposed public servants. Although many Americans believe, with the passage of civil rights legislation, we became a post-racist society, stories like Grace's prove them wrong. While, in itself, this story is not major, the cumulative effect of thousands of such indignities must be taken very seriously.

After being assured by email of a substantive reply to her letter, Grace has yet to receive one.

To the Director of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR),

I work for the Regional Environmental Council in Worcester, Massachusetts. I am writing to share with the DCR an experience my staff and I had at one of your sites, Horseneck Beach, on Wednesday, August 9th. I coordinate a program called YouthGROW, an urban

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Challenge

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bloc" people wearing masks that I saw flitting through the crowd Saturday were mirror images of the neo-Nazis — a lot of nerdy-looking, pent-up young males in costumes, trying to look tough, spoiling for a fight but afraid of getting hurt, hence the padding.

Seeing them raised a real question in my mind: Who threw the first punches in Emancipation Park in Charlottesville? Yeah, yeah, Nazis are bad. No kidding. But who threw the first punches in Emancipation Park? History will want to know.

Last week, I spoke with an old friend, the Rev. Peter Johnson, a Dallas black leader who spent most of the movement years in the 1960's at the side of MLK, at first as a young body guard and later as an advance man for the SCLC. He told me a story once about how hard it was to be nonviolent, and I asked him last week to tell me again.

He was 19 years old when this story took place in Selma, Alabama. James Reeb, a white Unitarian Universalist minister from Boston, was walking from a restaurant meeting with MLK and other movement leaders when he was attacked by white men, one of whom struck him a savage blow in the head with a club.

The Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, was the site of Bloody Sunday — March 7, 1965 — when Alabama state troopers, firing tear gas and wielding clubs, put 50 civil rights marchers in the hospital. Johnson still suffers from internal injuries he received on the bridge that day.

Johnson, who grew up in a small town in Louisiana, was a friend of Reeb. This story is about the heroic efforts that were required to keep Johnson from shooting a policeman in revenge for Reeb's death.

"First of all," Johnson told me, "growing up in the country, everywhere I went, in the trunk of my car was a tackle box with all of my fishing tackle and a shotgun because I grew up hunting and fishing.

Rev. Peter Johnson

"In Selma, Alabama, when James Reeb was beat to death, who was my friend, I went to get my goddamn gun out the trunk of my car, and I was going to kill an Alabama state policeman." He says he still believes that's what would have happened "if it hadn't been for Andy [Andrew Young] and Rev. [Ralph] Abernathy, who knew me well enough to know what kind of fool I was.

"I want you to realize this. James Reeb was bleeding to death in the back of a black hearse because the white ambulances wouldn't take him. The nurses and the medical people in the back of the hearse tried to stop this man from bleeding from his head.

"The hearse was parked in front of the Catholic church. There was a state police car on one side, right next to it. In front of it was another police car. Behind it was another one. It couldn't move unless somebody moved.

"Rev. Abernathy was begging them to let that hearse out. I'm 19 years old. I'm standing there on the steps. I'm listening to this shit. Rev. Abernathy said, 'If you don't let this man get to the hospital, he's going to bleed to death.'

"What he [the Alabama state trooper] said was, 'Let that nigger-lover bleed to death.' When he said that, I just turned around and went straight to the back of my car and got my shotgun. Chambered a round."

Johnson says he would have shot the policeman "if [Young and Abernathy] hadn't seen me, tackled me and wrestled that gun from me. It's lucky I didn't shoot one of them [the civil rights leaders], as crazy as I was."

The lesson he says the movement

Rev. James Reeb

leaders imparted to him in the days and months that followed was that he didn't have the right to strike back in anger. It wasn't his prerogative to find satisfaction in fighting back.

What counted in history was the moral equation. The racists were evil. The civil rights warriors were not. If James Reeb and countless other martyrs had to lie in the backs of ambulances or on the pavement and die in order to keep that equation whole, then they had to die.

So as the moment rushes down on us, while I do my own midcourse corrections and mea culpas to keep up and prepare, I hope the people who intend to confront the Nazis will give serious thought to how they're going to do it. Confronting the Nazis is good. Acting like them is bad. It's that simple, and it's that difficult. Ω

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Exercise In Concentration

by Dorothee Sölle

Editor's Note: This poem is reprinted from the author's book Revolutionary Patience *(Orbis Press, 1969).*

If I am absolutely still
I can hear the surge of the sea
from my bed
but it isn't enough to be absolutely still
I also have to draw my thoughts away from the land

It isn't enough to draw one's thoughts away from the land
I also have to attune my breathing to the sea
because I hear less when I breathe in

It isn't enough to attune one's breathing to the sea
I also have to ban impatience from my hands and feet

It isn't enough to calm my hands and feet
I also have to give up images

It isn't enough to give up images
I have to rid myself of striving

It isn't enough to be rid of striving
if I don't relinquish my ego

It isn't enough to relinquish the ego
I'm learning to fall

It isn't enough to fall
but as I fall
and drop away from myself
I no longer
seek the sea
because the sea
has come up from the coast now
has entered my room
surrounds me

If I'm absolutely still Ω

Why Not Be A Beggar?

by Peter Maurin

Fritz Eichenberg

People who are in need
and are not afraid to beg
give to people not in need
the occasion to do good
for goodness' sake.

Modern society
calls the beggar
bum and panhandler
and gives him the bum's rush.

The Greeks used to say
that people in need
are the ambassadors of the gods.

We read in the Gospel:
"As long as you did it
to one of the least
of My brothers
you did it to Me."

While modern society
calls the beggars
bums and panhandlers,
they are in fact
the Ambassadors of God.

To be God's Ambassador
is something
to be proud of. Ω

Harassment

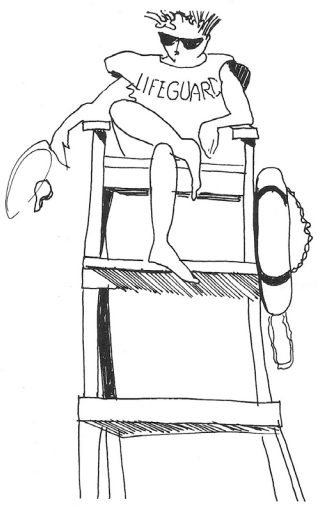
(Continued from Page 1)

agriculture-focused youth development and employment program for low-income teens. YouthGROW (Youth Growing Organics in Worcester) employs 32-40 low-income high school teens (age 14-18) year-round who gain leadership and jobs skills as they maintain two urban organic farms. While we are a year round program, our six-week summer session is the most intensive, with teens working 20-25 hours a week at our two sites, which produce over 2,500 pounds of food for food-insecure communities in Worcester. We begin the summer session with an overnight orientation camping trip at an AMC site. At the session's conclusion, we celebrate the youth's hard work with a trip to the beach. Youth in our program are hardworking, creative, and kind. They are also mostly people of color, predominantly black with many new Americans.

Prior to our visit on August 9th, I called the DCR number for Horseneck to ensure that we were properly prepared for the trip. We submitted a recreational use permit which indicated that, as required, we would be bringing an additional lifeguard on staff and more than the required number of adult staff chaperones. Since I was traveling with my 9-month-old son, I drove separately and arrived at the beach about 15 minutes later than the rest of our group. I received a call from one of my staff while still en route that an elderly woman had become very irate with him about our group and had approached him twice, making comments about being able to tell that they were "from the inner city" and that they "needed to learn respect." By his account, the youth were not doing anything wrong and had been throwing a football back and forth, but were a respectful distance from other beachgoers. The staff member was upset and felt that the group was being unfairly profiled.

I checked in with staff when I paid for my parking and asked who would be the best person to check in with about this, and they said to speak to a lifeguard. Our group was at the furthest possible stretch of beach to the right hand side when facing the water, and when I arrived, I saw, as my staff had described, that we were indeed a respectful distance from other beach-goers. I approached the lifeguard to check in with him about the interaction, and, when he saw who the other beachgoer was, he was very dismissive. He said that the woman was a regular, and that she didn't mean anything by it. I agreed with him that it wasn't a serious issue but reiterated that I had wanted to make him aware of it and that "our youth need to be treated with respect."

Minutes after I spoke with him, I noticed another beachgoer, perhaps in his 40's, who had gotten up from his blanket, which was in front of ours and closer to the water, and approached our group. He stood, only a few feet away from the young men who were throwing the football, with his back to the water and arms folded. I should note that our group was directly next to the lifeguard chair. The staff who had called me about the initial reaction told me that man had been chiming out agreement with the original woman who had been upset. I asked the lifeguard if everything was OK, introducing myself as the director of the youth group. He responded that he "figured they wanted someone to be watching them since they're causing a commotion." He let me know that he "would be watching." I want to be very clear that while his words could be interpreted in a variety of ways, his body language was deliberately threatening. He stood uncomfortably and inappropriately close to our group with his arms folded and back to the water and remained there until our youth had moved even further away up the beach. Despite the fact that I had checked in with the lifeguard immediately upon arriving and this took place within ten feet of the lifeguard chair, there was no intervention at any point.



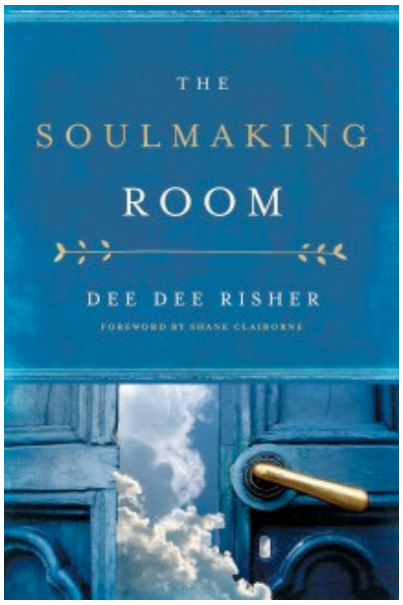
We stayed at the beach for about two and half hours, and these interactions all occurred within the first 30 minutes. Towards the end of our visit, most of our youth had moved into the water. We had reviewed our internal rules for the trip before leaving and explained that no one was allowed to go in beyond their waist, and highlighted the dangers of riptides at this particular beach. Our on-staff lifeguard was in the water with our group of about 15 teens as well as two other adults. The youth were holding hands in a line and jumping in unison as each wave arrived. They were following our rule to stay only waist deep. There was no horseplay, they were well supervised, and they were not the furthest out in the water by any means. Despite this, the same lifeguard whom I had spoken to earlier, approached one of our staff and demanded that our group come in closer to shore. When I asked him how deep was OK for them be in the water, he cut me off angrily and said that if I didn't get our whole group to come in immediately, he would kick us off the beach.

While it was a beautiful day and is a beautiful beach, our experience as a group was predominantly a strong feeling that we were unwelcome. This was particularly heartbreaking for me since I have been coming to this beach since I was a child and have never had a negative experience prior to this point. (I am white.) I am detailing this account of our experience to you, not in the hopes of any specific action or outcome for our program, but because I hope the DCR will take seriously the feedback that more work is needed to make our state's beaches welcoming and safe spaces for all Americans, particularly young people of color. Ω

The Soulmaking Room

reviewed by Claire Schaeffer-Duffy

The Soulmaking Room
By Dee Dee Risher. Upper Room Books, Nashville, TN, 2016



In *Blessed Among all Women*, Robert Ellsberg describes how mystic Catherine of Siena sought Christ in the "cell" of self-knowledge. For three years, she enclosed herself in a room, besieged by doubts, demons, and taunting voices until she finally laughs them away. Christ then immediately appears to her. "And where were you?" she asks, reproachfully.

"I was in your heart," comes the reply.

Catherine's story came to mind while reading Dee Dee Risher's astutely confessional memoir about her search for God and true self in life's losses and failures. Woven into this self-examination is the Biblical story of the Shunammite woman who built a room for the prophet Elisha.

Risher was raised in rural white South Carolina of the 1960's within a loving, industrious family. Hers was a happy childhood that nurtured an expectant faith and deep sense of place. After graduating from Duke University, she worked among poor, rural African Americans and the urban homeless, then traveled to China to teach English- experiences that stoke a passion for a more just world.

But the woman who wants to lay down her life as bridge over that "awful chasm" between the fattened wealthy and famished poor encounters the confines of marriage and parenting. She and husband Will resist the consumerism ingrained in American life, raising their children in inner-city Philadelphia, gardening, and renting. Depression periodically consumes Will. The magazine she devoted twenty years to folds. The justice she desires is rarely visible. Beneath the exhaustion, the disappointments, the glancing back at the road not taken is a faith as stubborn as that of the Shunammite woman who demands Elisha revive her dead son.

Some readers might find Risher too scrupulous. Yet her life review is neither self-absorbed nor ideological. Here is the experiential wisdom of a woman who cares deeply about the world she inhabits. She offers insightful and candid reflections on faith vs religion; the gift and "danger" of hospitality; the struggles of raising caring children in a consumeristic society divided along the lines of class and race.

Like many of us, Risher has not realized the life she envisioned. In reckoning with the shortfall, she learns the value of gratitude and the mechanics of redemption. More importantly, she discovers God is in the deficits. She experiences God within herself.

"I am now more who I truly am," she writes. "Suddenly, unexplainably, I am unfathomably in love with this life. This love comes from nowhere, a surge of some Spirit barreling through me. Unaccountably, every small soul whom I encounter seems drenched in humanness, and I cannot stop loving the flesh and frailty of everyone."

This is a slim book, one you can read in a Sunday afternoon. If you do, don't put it back on the book shelf. Keep it where you can consult its wisdom frequently. Ω

Off the Coast of Trapani

by Claire Schaeffer-Duffy

Do you remember, my sisters,
those hot nights,
when we slept three in a bed beneath
a spinning ceiling fan,
blades churning currents of cool air
in thick stillness?

How tiny our bodies
sprawled across the mattress
at the end of the marble corridor.

The bed was our ocean,
and we, fish, swimming rippled waves.
The bed was our savannah,
and we, beasts, stalking through grasslands.
The bed was our raft
bobbing in the darkness.
Crocodiles lurked below.
Monsters blinked in the hinterlands,
and you were always there beside me,
my sisters,
one to my left, one to my right,
sweating sweetly,
breathing sweetly,
beneath the white, whirring fan.

No air for you, my sisters,
who pattered out of Nigeria,
crawled the desert, and boarded
vessels unfit
to cross the glistening sea.

Gagging on fuel-ladened water,
you bit and clawed for breath,
packed, stacked, crushed beneath broken deck
and the panicked feet of men.

In vests the color of marigolds,
you lie side-by-side, o my sisters,
one to the left, one to the right,
bobbing face downward
at the bottom of a white dinghy
off the coast of Trapani. Ω

Editor's Note: In July 2016, the MV Aquarius *rescued two white, rubber dinghies packed with migrants and listing off the Italian coast. Exhausted men were flopped across the rim, and, at the bottom of the dinghy, 22 dead young women. Rescuers think the women were crushed after the wooden deck snapped and punctured the craft, or asphyxiated from gasoline contaminating the leaking water.*

False Balancing in *The Vietnam War*

by Jerry Lembcke

When Karl Marlantes takes the screen during the new PBS film series *The Vietnam War*, he says coming home was nearly as traumatic as the war itself. Later, he describes being assaulted by protesters at the airport, invoking the image of spat-on Vietnam veterans, an image that *Los Angeles Times* editorial writer Michael McGough said in 2012 was based on a myth....

With *The Vietnam War,* Ken Burns and Lynn Novick have created a film that rehashes some old, tired tropes. In doing so, they distort what soldiers, veterans, and antiwar activists alike know about the war and its aftermath, especially inside the United States....

A historical documentary in search of consensus, *The Vietnam War* indulges in Cold War common sense. It pits East against West and the United States against Communism. It could have been made in the 1980s. More recent scholarship might have provided a fresher frame and more comprehensive account of the war. For instance, Gareth Porter, in his 2005 *Perils of Dominance*, argues that the US stepped into a swamp of local-level conflicts, where East-West ideological tensions were largely irrelevant.... Had they brought to life this new thinking about the war, Burns and Novick would have made a more enduring contribution.

Instead, *The Vietnam War* gives us a throwback to the days when fighting the Communist bogeyman justified all manner of US military intervention. The film is organized around a drumbeat of the Communists did this, the Communists did that—Communist aggression, Communist assassinations, Communists kill their enemy wounded....

Antiwar activists, anxious about how the movement is treated, will be among the most eager viewers of *The Vietnam War*, but they will find only cool acknowledgment and some common misrepresentations. War opponent Bill Zimmerman provides one of the most thoughtful and sincere interviews in the film; war veteran W. D. Ehrhart, now a well-published poet, mans up with a touching recollection of his participation in an atrocity; veteran and author Tim O'Brien talks about his own "failure of nerve" when faced with the option of resisting the military, reads from his 1990 novel *The Things They Carried*, and slams the legal proceedings that allowed the My Lai murderers to go unpunished.

We get the inspiring story of Jack Todd, who dutifully followed other men in his

Student poster, UCLA Berkeley, 1970

family into the army but later deserts from Fort Lewis, Washington, and goes to Canada; and of Valerie Kushner, who comes out against the war and endorses peace candidate George McGovern for president while her husband, Hal, is still held as a POW in Hanoi. But if you think these paeans to the peacemakers put Marlantes's betrayal fantasies behind us, think again....

Burns and Novick are the masters of false balancing, the technique of countering one story line with another to create the impression of objective evenhandedness. The same good-guy, bad-guy lens through which the war was viewed also filtered perceptions of the antiwar movement at home. Jack Todd is one of 30,000 Americans who deserted to Canada but, we are reassured, 30,000 Canadians volunteered to go to Vietnam. Never mind that, by other estimates, over 100,000 Americans are estimated to have gone to Canada during the war. The first figure apparently called for such dubious balancing because, as we later learn, Todd regrets having renounced his US citizenship.

The one-dimensional picture of draft resisters in Canada that the film paints would have become fuller and more nuanced had the filmmakers consulted John Hagen's 2001 *Northern Passage: American War Resisters in Canada*. In it, Hagen shows that group to be full of highly creative and capable young men, most of them model citizens in Canada, recognized for their contributions to education, politics, and the arts....

Valerie Kushner appears to be a strong and principled fighter for peace—a challenging image to "balance." But Burns and Novick are up to the task of turning her resistance inside out. They assert, with no supporting evidence, that Kushner was "exploited" by the North Vietnamese, and take at face value the claim of her husband Hal, returning from captivity, to have been shocked at the sight of American girls in miniskirts. When the couple's marriage dissolves, Valerie Kushner comes out looking, well, not so good.

This is how mythmaking works. The film goes directly from the Valerie Kushner story to "Hanoi Jane," to … the opening scene of 1968's *Barbarella*, where we see Jane Fonda as the underdressed namesake of the film. This clumsy invocation of the femme fatales of wartime perfidy running across the millennia—from Lysistrata to Malinche, Mata Hari to Tokyo Rose—if the reminder is needed, helps build the gendered narrative of the war being lost to home front weakness, our POWs forsaken and forgotten, and troops returning from Vietnam scorned by protesters, and spat on by girls.

Some veteran protesters receive better treatment in the film. The 1971 medal-turn-in ceremony of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War is treated well, but Andrew Hunt's 1999 *The Turning: A History of Vietnam Veterans Against the War* would have provided documentation, as would have the testimony of founders like Jan Barry or leaders like Barry Romo, who went to Hanoi with a peace delegation in 1972. Donald Duncan, the Green Beret who "quit" the Army in protest of the war

in 1965, inspiring many others to do the same, is missing from the story, and that's a shame.

By the end of the film, even the glimpses we've been given of veterans politicized and empowered by their time in Vietnam are overridden by victim veteran imagery—itself a stand-in for the America that was wounded and left traumatized by the war.... With "The Wall" as backdrop, we hear "Bridge over Troubled Water" and Columbia University student activist, now housing lawyer, Nancy Biberman's repentance for calling veterans "baby killers"—another trope attributed to the antiwar movement for which there is no supporting evidence.

Stories that Vietnam veterans were called "baby killers" are now as common as the spitting stories. They seem to fill some need for the people who tell and believe them. Perhaps it is a need for conformity to the now-dominant narratives about the war and those who opposed it, or guilt that the war was fought by those less privileged than those who fought against it. Whatever the reason, the stories keep alive the idea that the war could have been won if home front support had not wavered—and that wars like it can be won in the future if We the People stay loyal to the mission. Ω

Editor's Note: Jerry Lembcke is a Vietnam veteran and the author of The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam. *The complete text of this article is at:* www.publicbooks.org/burns-and-novick-masters-of-false-balancing/.

The Un-National Monument

by William Stafford

This is the field
where the battle did not happen,
where the unknown soldier did not die.
This is the field where grass joined hands,
where no monument stands,
and the only heroic thing is the sky.

Birds fly here without any sound,
unfolding their wings across the open.
No people killed
—or were killed—on this ground
hallowed by neglect and an air so tame
that people celebrate it
by forgetting its name. Ω

Editor's Note: The author was a conscientious objector during the Second World War.

LETTERS

To Whom It May Concern,
Hi there,
I am a prison inmate, and have been since 1980 when at 19 years old I was convicted of rape. Thirty-eight years later, I am still in prison due to the fact I was innocent of the charge. (Guilty people get credit for being remorseful.)

I have no family, and for some reason I started receiving your periodical two years ago. Don't have any friends out there, either, so I don't know who subscribed to it for me.

It's an okay publication, but what mostly comes through is that the people who put it out really mean well. Decent people are few and far between in my life, so I picked up on that right away.

Don't get me wrong, I don't agree with your every position, but as a practical matter people out there are denied the opportunity to study the limits of their own perspectives. By which I mean to say what counts most is the fact you mean well. Don't think me arrogant, please. I don't mean to suggest I'm always right about things.

Anyhow, mostly I spend my time trying to teach myself to draw, but years ago I wrote a rough draft of two books. They were awful, but I can write well enough.

As I mentioned, I have no family out there, but still if anyone can benefit from my experiences and a life of continuous hardship and deprivation, I'd be happy to help. I mean, I don't know for a fact anyone might, but if a simple article or two suits your purposes I'd give it a try. Being cut off from free society is plenty unpleasant, and it would give me a chance to remember my innate humanity.

Richard Deeds # 14946
Warm Springs Correctional Center
PO Box 7007
Carson City, NV 89702

Editor's Note: Mr. Deeds asked us to include his full address saying, "My hope is that some kindred spirit might be prompted to write me a letter."

Catholic Worker Calendar

October 4 (The Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi) & 18, November 8 — Evening Prayer: Join us for prayer and Taize chant at 7 P.M., 52 Mason Street.

October 14 & November 11 — Vigil to Reverse the Gun Culture: Join us at The Gun Parlor shooting range from 12:30-1:30 P.M., 170 Prescott Street, Worcester.

November 16 — National Day to Call for the Removal of the Military from Jesuit Campuses: Join us outside Holy Cross College's Saint Joseph Chapel on the anniversary of the murder of six Jesuits in El Salvador. Noon - 1. P.M.

Mason Street Musings

Fifty-two Mason Street got a facelift this summer. We hired a professional to paint the house, and we renovated the downstairs kitchen. For years, our humble abode exhibited a fine example of the Patchwork Style – a look defined by the time and capacities of Scott and volunteer painters. The porches and lower half of the house periodically received fresh coats of paint while sections that required terrifying ascents up an extension ladder kept their original hue. Now even the trim on the attic dormer window matches all the others, giving the place a uniformity that is almost unnerving.

In the kitchen, Scott and I ripped off the faux tile paneling and discovered the room's original wainscoting. A blue-eyed carpenter knocked down a patch of wall and constructed a nook. On a hot Saturday in July, David Maher and three boys from Valley View School, equipped with all manner of chisels, tackled the kitchen floor. They scraped off the linoleum tiles and pried up sheets of plywood, Scott, Aiden, and I assisting. It was back-straining, dirty work — a lot of yank, haul, and sweep. But the task was less arduous with all of us at it, heads down and searching for the blasted nails fastening the plywood.

Renovating a kitchen is akin to heart surgery; the flow of life is dramatically altered until the procedure is complete. This was especially true at 52 where you must pass through the kitchen to get to every other room on the first floor.

"It'll take less than two weeks," I told Scott, who dreaded the disruption. But the blue-eyed carpenter was not as capable, or as cheap as his estimate. Every uncovering revealed damage from previous inhabitants. There were holes in the wainscoting and a kerosene spill on the douglas fir floor. Zealous in demolition, I became despairing after a week of scraping door frames, then downright neurotic over choosing a color of paint for the room.

Humility and gratitude accompany every redemption, even the brick-and-mortar kind. The uncovering that showed the scars of the house also revealed the patience of its builders. I thought of them nailing the lathes, smearing walls of horsehair plaster, and laying floor planks one at a time, laborers giving their bodies to the toil of building a house that still shelters people a hundred and twenty years later. Did they know their work would be so lasting?

Scott was finishing the painting (we settled on flaxen wheat) when I left for Albuquerque to attend orientation for the Living School, the Center for Action and Contemplation's two-year program of contemplative practice and online study. The coursework baffles and inspires. Contemplation is "a whole different bandwith of consciousness," says the teacher, a matter of aligning the mind with heart seeing.

The "heart" at 52 is pumping again. Brothers from B&R Flooring put the final coat of polyurethane on the kitchen floor last Saturday two months after we began our makeover. Beneath the sheen, you can see the kerosene stain and many nail holes. Scott thinks the flaws give the room a uniquely Catholic Worker beauty. The new nook exposes the kitchen's third external door. Our space is now Trinitarian with portals for Parent, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Our guest G is with us, having fled the ravages of Hurricane Irma in Georgia. Heavy rains flooded his flimsy trailer, and overflow from the St. John's River deposited alligators in the living rooms of nearby homes. "Can you imagine?" he said. "It was like a war zone down there." But G is feeling strong these days, so when his bus ticket arrives, he'll return to rebuild. And in this time of so much catastrophe and destruction, isn't that the work of all of us? To build and harbor, trusting God is with us. Ω **Claire**

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